

# What Kids can Do...

## Building a Positive Self-Image

Self-esteem is how you see yourself as a person. If you value the type of person you are, you have a good sense of self-esteem and are proud to be you. You value your skills and talents, respect your own intelligence and act on your own feelings and beliefs. But if you could feel better about yourself, these tips might give you some ideas about how to start:

**Listen to self talk.** We all carry on a steady mental dialogue. Do you ever listen to yourself? Do you put yourself down or call yourself names? Learn to hear the things you say about yourself, then replace that dialogue with positive images. Stop negative self-talk at the source to take the first step towards a more positive image.

**Recognize accomplishments.** Make a list of your accomplishments, no matter how small they may seem to you. Maybe you won't win a Nobel Prize, but your accomplishments have worth to you. By recognizing them, you can begin to understand that you are important and have self-worth.

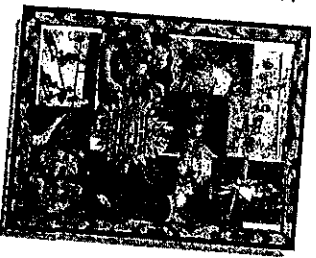
**Be assertive.** Learn to be assertive and to practice clear communication. Say what you mean and respect what others have to say. Remember that you have rights too.

**Be tolerant.** Be tolerant of yourself and others. "Nobody's perfect!" Try not to criticize yourself or other people habitually and don't expect others to criticize you. Recognize that a mistake is only a mistake and don't dwell on it.

**Know good friends.** Spend time with people who value you. Listen to what they say about you. If others are constantly putting you down, you might want to reconsider those relationships. People you choose to be around are often mirrors of how you feel about yourself. You can find the best in yourself and others by expecting it.

**Participate. . . don't just spectate this summer!**

**Check out your Erie County Summer Source Guide!**



The *Erie County Summer Source Book* will be delivered to schools in May free of charge. Watch for your edition to locate:

- Summer camps
- Classes
- Activities
- Special interest groups and organizations
- Summer jobs and volunteer opportunities.

For more information, call the Erie County Executive's Office at 814-451-6333

## Assertiveness: Saying "Yes", Saying "No"

Do you have trouble saying what you think? Speaking directly? Asking for help? If so, you may need to learn more about assertiveness. Assertiveness is the ability to acknowledge the thoughts and feelings of others without downplaying the importance of your own.

**Confront old fears.** Many of us were taught as young children to "be nice" and not to "say things

like that." Since children are often unable to know what's appropriate, it might make sense that our natural honesty is silenced. But many of us carry those lessons today. When confronted with situations in which we really must communicate honestly, we don't know how. We're too afraid of hurting others' feelings, of being rejected or of making mistakes. But it is possible to be too polite. Don't let yourself get lost in your concern for others.

**Enjoy clearer communication.** Some people are highly skilled at getting what they want by manipulation, by trying to place blame or by trying to induce guilt feelings in others. Once you begin to communicate clearly, such people will probably stop using manipulative communication with you because they will know it's not effective. Your interaction with others can then be more honest and satisfying.



**Keep to the point.** Ashley got her driver's license last month, and promised Kate that she would take her shopping on Saturday. But an emergency has come up and Ashley dreads calling her to cancel their plans. Kate can be difficult when she doesn't get her way. Ashley may be thinking, "Why doesn't she take the bus, or get a ride from another friend? Why does she always rely on me?" It's because Ashley is nervous about having to tell Kate she can't go. But the fact that Kate doesn't have a driver's license and is relying on Ashley is not the point of this conversation. The point of this conversation is to cancel plans with Kate.

ASHLEY states the situation:  
I'm sorry, but I can't take you shopping Saturday, Kate. My mom needs me to help her with my little brother's birthday party.

KATE tries to make Ashley feel guilty:  
But you promised! Now what am I going to do?

ASHLEY acknowledges Kate's disappointment, then restates the situation:  
I understand that you're disappointed and I'm sorry there's been a change in plans, but I won't be able to take you.

KATE, surprised by Ashley's firmness, realizes she has no alternative:  
Oh, okay. Maybe some other time.  
ASHLEY would like to go with Kate some other time, so she gives her a specific action:  
Sure, Kate. Give me a call next week and we'll arrange another time.

**Learn other communication skills.** Use confident body language and a clear voice and tone. Be a good listener. Ask questions if you're not sure you understand. Use common courtesy. Remember that others have the right to disagree.

**Take the first small steps.** Assertiveness doesn't happen overnight, nor does it happen all at once. Like any new skill, it is learned in small steps. Try rehearsing new situations. Here are some examples:

- Your friend, Jen, wants to borrow the new Limited sweater you bought with your birthday money, but she tore the Gap T-shirt you loaned her last month. How do you tell her "no"?
- Your co-worker, Rob, tells you that you have to try riding your skateboard on State Street with your eyes shut. How do you tell him "no way"?
- Mike asks you out - you don't want to go, but you don't want to hurt his feelings. Your friend Brittany suggests you call him to say you're sick just a few hours before he's supposed to pick you up. Is this the right way to handle the situation?

As you gain confidence, gradually add new skills. Over time, your self-respect will shine through and those around you will respect you for saying what you mean.

(Sources: HealthPLACE 1995, *Parity International*, 1610.085 and 1610.076).

# Fashion sense and fashion Nonsense

Once you get to middle school, how you look becomes very important to you. And what clothes you wear to achieve your "look" gets enormous attention.

From sneakers to shirts to shoes, there is a lot of peer pressure to wear the "right" clothes. Of course, what's "right" today may be "wrong" tomorrow. It can be hard to keep up with the "phattest" fashions.

A lot of what kids think about clothes and fashion comes from advertising on TV. A lot also comes from the music, TV, sports and movies you like. The people you enjoy watching or listening to help determine what you wear.

It's easy to see in sneakers, where styles change every year. Most models are just referred to by the popular players whose name is on them. "Have you seen the new Jordans? Those Kobes look cool. Are there any Rodmans on the shelf?"

Or maybe you see a rapper dressed in Tommy Hilfinger or a sports star in Nautica. You like the rapper or star and like the look. You look for the same brands or styles. As styles become popular with more and more people, the peer pressure to wear them increases. Fashion peer pressure is something that builds on itself.

## Peer Pressure

The pressure from friends may be intense to get the latest designer clothes, even if they are very expensive. But there is always one thing to remember: Creating a style is a personal decision. YOU create the look for YOU. And YOU decide what is cool for YOU.

So how can you deal with fashion peer pressure? Sometimes a simple statement about your clothes like "I'm cool with this" is enough. Or you can simply say, "I don't need that..."

## Power of Advertising

The pressure for buying certain fashions often starts with advertising. Ads that are cool, or unusual, or funny, can have great appeal with teens and other viewers. Ads create an "image" about what people are like who wear a certain kind of clothing, or buy a certain kind of product.

As a class, discuss some ads you have seen on TV or in the newspaper. Exchange ideas on what image each ad is creating for its product. Is this an image that attracts you? Why or why not?

Designer labels -- and famous "brand names" for all products -- usually cost more than lesser known labels. The reason for this is not that items are always higher quality. A lot of the extra cost is connected to all the advertising that goes into creating an image for the label.



## Fashion Warning

The peer pressure connected to fashion has sometimes lead to violence. People who want a fashion, but can't (or won't) pay for it have threatened people with violence if they don't "give it up".

In some neighborhoods, or cities, people have been beaten or even killed for jackets, sneakers, sunglasses, or jewelry.

**ALWAYS REMEMBER:** No piece of clothing is worth risking your life. You can always get other sneakers. But you only have one life.

## CHECK OUT THE NEWS!

1. The things you like in fashion are reflected by the advertising you see in the newspaper. Look through the clothing and sneaker ads in today's *Morning News*. Create a wardrobe for yourself to wear to school for three days. Shoes, pants, shirts, blouses -- the works. Don't worry about cost. Write down the pages where you found each item. Put a checkmark next to each item that is a designer label. Compare with the rest of the class.
2. Divide the number of designer labels on your list by the total number of items to find the percentage of designer labels. Compare the percentages as a class. Who had the highest percent? The lowest?
3. Find a photo of teens or pre-teens in the *Morning News*. Write a description of how they are dressed. Use vivid adjectives to describe their clothes. Then write whether you could wear clothes like these. Finally, write whether you think there is fashion peer pressure in the picture, based on how much alike the kids are dressed.

# Trying to make the Grade

One of the biggest sources of pressure in school is the issue of grades.

Depending on your circle of friends, you may be pressured by peers to do all the extra credit projects and never give yourself a break. Or you may have friends who make you feel it's uncool to be smart, or geeky to get good grades.

All of these peer pressures can make school uncomfortable for you. And the ones that pressure you NOT to work at studies can actually hurt you in the future.

## Poll Time

Take a break and poll your classmates to see who has experienced the peer pressures listed above. Which were the most common peer pressures about grades? How did you or classmates respond to them? Would you respond the same if the pressure were applied today? Were there any other peer pressures experienced about grades? Make a bar graph to show the class results of this poll. Compute the percentages of the results in the different categories.

## Fast Track

Different peer pressures require different strategies. If you are being pressured by friends to be always working on extra credit projects, or competing for grades, you may be missing out on some rewarding and creative activities.

In many communities, there is great pressure as early as middle school to start thinking about college. Kids with college goals want to make sure they get on the right track. Sometimes they push each other to do more and more. And sometimes they are just plain pushy, pressuring you to tell what kind of grades you get on tests or report cards. This kind of competition can get very serious. And it can even hurt friendships.

With your family, teachers, or school counselors, you should talk about your courses and what you need to get from them. And you may need to make practical choices that will give your school experience balance between classwork and fun.



Once you start playing down grades, you may start to slack off. And if you get out of good study habits, you may find it hard to get back in the groove when a big test or assignment comes up.

The best defense against anti-grade peer pressure is always to measure yourself against you alone. Set challenges for YOU. Make it a matter of pride that what YOU do matters to YOU.

If you still get pressured about your grades by other kids, you can just shrug and say "I did well for myself" or "It was my lucky day." You don't need to defend yourself to others. You'll know inside that you did what's right for you.

## Stereotypes

Some ethnic groups experience different kinds of peer pressure when it comes to grades. One of the hardest issues for African American leaders in some communities has been the question of good grades being linked to "acting white".

Asian students often feel pressured to excel in math, science and other classes. And girls sometimes feel they are pushed away from some subjects—like math or science.

Education has long been a way for Americans of all colors to work their way out of poverty or hardship. But some young African Americans—who are frustrated at limited jobs or opportunities in their areas—have linked schools to a "white" system that has made things difficult for them and their families.

In turn, they have pressured their peers to make a choice: showing pride in being black by not going along with the "white" system, or doing well in school and "acting white."

The pressure for Asian kids to succeed—or match up to the stereotypes some people have of Asian students—can be difficult too.

Many Asian students are indeed outstanding at science or math. But it is unfair for anyone to pressure any student to meet a stereotype or standard that does not fit every student.

# Feeling the pressure in Sports



For many kids, sports are a big part of life in school. Athletics give you a way to keep fit, be active and let off energy in a positive way. Competition offers a way to challenge yourself and measure your skills against those of others. Sports teach lessons in how to win - or - lose - with class. Sports also are an arena for peer pressure.

As in other areas, some of this pressure is good, some bad.

## Think Positive

Positive sports peer pressure comes in many forms. Say you are a girl who likes basketball but have never had the chance to play much. You see some of the other girls your age and you think they're all way better than you. You're tall and tough, but your shooting and dribbling need work.

On a team, not everyone needs to be a superstar. Good players recognize this. Your peers may see that you could be just the rebounder the team needs. They may pressure you to try out and work hard. They may push you to make the most of the strengths you have while improving your other skills.

This is positive peer pressure, because it forces you to get over your timidity. It pushes you to get better. And it encourages you to have faith in the abilities you have.

## Not So Positive

Sports can be a source of negative peer pressure, too. The main reason is that not everyone has the same ability at a sport. This often can lead to negative peer pressure on a ballfield. Say a group of friends is playing football. A young, awkward kid wants to join. How many times have you heard people say "you stink" and refuse to let the new kid play? Or have you seen them ignore him completely, choosing only to talk and play with each other?

The pressure being exerted by the group says "You don't belong. Go away." Or it says "We got game. You don't. Get lost."

This is a very common kind of sports peer pressure. Athletes who have skill have a hard time putting themselves in the place of those who don't. They often put down the less skilled or leave them out. They can't imagine what that feels like.

To get over this, it takes one person with the strength and smarts to say "Oh, give him a chance" or "Let's see what he's got." One person can break through the peer pressure of the group and broaden the game.

Most times this doesn't hurt the competition. And sometimes you discover that a kid who looks unskilled has got game in ways that surprise you.

## In the Halls

Sports peer pressure isn't found only on the playing fields or in the gym. The way athletes act in school often gives them a special personality.

"What are they like?" someone asks. "They're jocks." "Jock" behavior among boys is often physical, with lots of rough-housing. It may be loud, with lots of trash talk and boasting. It may involve "macho" challenges, or intimidation of smaller kids.

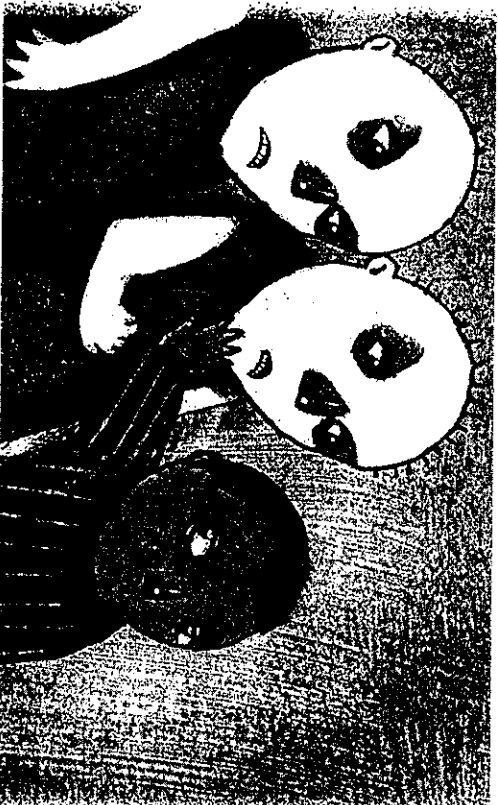
"Jock" behavior among boys is often less physical out of the gym. But it can be loud and energetic and include an edge and competition in dealings with other people.

Like other groups in school, jock groups act alike. They make it hard for others to get in and they can make it hard on people who want to get out of the group and make other friends.

## CHECK OUT THE NEWS!

1. Peer pressure about doing well does not just occur in schools. It can happen on the job, too. Workers who work extra hard are sometimes pressured by workers who think they are "showing us up." Working who don't work as hard as others may be pressured to "shape up." Pick a job from the Help Wanted listing in the *Classified Ads* section. Write two ways you could imagine peer pressure working on the job.
2. Team play in sports is an example of peer pressure. It starts with a coach, but how a team plays comes back to the players. Playing good team defense, for example, requires that everyone push each other. Look for a sport written about in today's *Morning News*. Write out three ways peer pressure can be seen in the team. Think off-the-field as well as on.

# Handling Anger and Avoiding Violence



In today's world, violence is a fact of life in many areas. And violence affects kids as young as middle school, and sometimes even elementary school. Peer pressure is often a factor in violence. Kids sometimes face peer pressure and use violence to solve their problems. And many kids use peer pressure to try to get classmates NOT to use violence.

Violence grows out of anger. Anger is not a bad thing in itself. It is a normal part of being a person. Showing anger in a violent way, however, is both bad and dangerous.

Your peers in your neighborhood or family or school affect how you behave. Not all of these people are the same age as you. Peers in your neighborhood may be older (age is just one way to connect a peer group). What you have in common with them is your neighborhood.

If people you know use violence to solve problems, you will feel pressure to be violent as well. It may not be spoken pressure. It may just be the feeling you have to be violent to avoid being hurt by violence.

Sometimes the peer pressure is actually spoken. Your friends may challenge you to fight someone, or be violent to get even for something done to your group. They may accuse you of being afraid or weak if you don't fight.

## Walk Away

It is hard to get away from this kind of peer pressure. But the best idea is to just "walk away". The NBA has run a series of ads featuring pro basketball players telling kids that they don't have to be violent to be strong. It is good advice. Being strong means being strong enough to not solve problems with violence.

## Positive Pressure

One way a lot of schools have tried to cut down on violence is to use an approach called "peer mediation". In this, classmates try to help each settle arguments without violence. Usually, one student, a "mediator", will get kids who are angry to talk out their problem. This approach often releases anger in a healthy way, with words, instead of violence. Another way peer pressure can be used to fight violence is to get kids to pledge not to use violence, or to work for peaceful solutions to problems.

## Deadly Violence

In a number of schools across the nation, students have taken guns or knives and wounded other students. In some of the cases, classmates have heard the students make threats to use violence, to shoot or even to kill.

In most cases, the students did not take the kids' threats seriously. And the peer pressure not to "sell out" another student prevented classmates from reporting the threats to an adult.

This was a deadly kind of peer pressure in the end. When no adult was informed of the threats, the students making threats followed through with deadly violence.

No matter what you think, it is never selling out to report a threat of violence in school. Telling an adult can help head off violence before it happens.

Everyone will be safer as a result.

## CHECK OUT THE NEWS!

1. Violent acts often land people in court before a judge. Look for a story in today's *Morning News* about a court case involving violence. Write out ways that peer pressure might have helped prevent the violence in the case.

2. Photos are a powerful tool for getting a message across. Think of yourself as a newspaper photographer. What would you shoot a picture of to show the effects of violence? Do any photos in today's *Morning News* show the effects of violence?

3. Look through the ads in today's paper for one that catches your eye. Then design an ad showing the effect of peer pressure in a way that could reduce violence.

Display your ads in class.



# Where to find Help

This information is provided by Hamot Health Foundation.  
For more information, call 814-877-5678 or visit on-line at [www.Hamot.org](http://www.Hamot.org).

*You can probably still recall what peer pressure felt like during your adolescent and teen years. As a group of people invited you to "come on, do it!" you and they knew that what they were asking you to do was wrong. Today's peer pressure has changed.*

*The following information provides local resources to help you and your kids.*

## Hamot Institute for Behavioral Health

The Hamot Institute for Behavioral Health offers a variety of emergency services and the region's only child and adolescent behavioral health unit. Educational programs for parents, teachers, medical professionals and businesses are offered also. For more information on the Hamot Institute for Behavioral Health, call 814-877-6136.

## Center for Personal and Family Growth *An affiliate of the Hamot Health Foundation*

The Center for Personal and Family Growth offers confidential and professional assistance to individuals and families for a range of emotional, psychological and behavioral problems and health-related concerns. The center's goal is to enhance personal growth and wellbeing.

Professionals specializing in a broad spectrum of behavioral health areas carry out individual and group assessment and counseling. Individuals or families in need of counseling can arrange for an appointment with just a simple phone call (evening and weekend appointments are available). Some initial information will be taken over the phone and an appointment will be set up with the appropriate professional.

The center provides outpatient counseling in many areas. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* offers assessment and counseling for children and adolescents with poor school performance, attention span problems, substance abuse tendencies, poor self-esteem and other related problems. *Family counseling* addresses various problems and helps families to develop the skills needed in parent/child or sibling relationships through group assessments and therapy.

For more information about the Center for Personal and Family Growth or for a confidential appointment, call 814-877-7065.

## Hamot Health Connection

The Hamot Health Connection recognizes the importance of having access to a variety of tools to help you and your family maintain a healthy lifestyle. Below is a list of programs offered at the Hamot Health Connection that are geared towards young adults and their parents. To register for any of these programs or for a complete program catalog, call 814-877-6145.

### *For Daughters (ages 9-12) and Their Mothers*

*Note: This session is scheduled for Friday, August 18 from 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.*

During the first session, participants will strengthen communication and relationships. The second part concentrates on body and emotional changes. The cost is \$25 for the seminar and includes both mother and daughter.

### *For Sons (ages 9-12) and Their Mothers*

*Note: This session is scheduled for Thursday, August 22 from 9:30 - noon.*

Mothers will learn how to help their sons understand the emotional physical changes he's experiencing are normal. Discuss with him basic facts concerning adolescent sexuality. Class activities are aimed at fostering continuing dialog between mother and son. The cost is \$15 for the seminar and includes both mother and son.

### *Helping Your Child Relax*

*Note: This session is scheduled for Thursday, August 24 from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.*

Learn relaxation and visualization skills to share with your child. The cost is \$5.

## Project B-Fit Mind & Body

*This program is sponsored by Hamot Health Foundation and community partners.*

*Project B-Fit Mind & Body* enrolls interested 13-18 year olds in a leadership-training program that helps peer mediators develop necessary skills -- role playing, listening techniques, self-esteem activities, etc. The program is implemented in area schools with assistance from volunteers and teachers who help coordinate the mentors' time for training and presentations. Currently, *Project B-Fit Mind and Body's* training program is based in a number of area schools -- Northwest Pennsylvania Collegiate Academy, Mercyhurst Prep, Harborcreek, McDowell, Cathedral Prep, Strong Vincent and Roosevelt. For more information on *Project B-Fit Mind & Body*, contact your school's principal or the Hamot Wellness Center at 814-877-7030.

# Kids Talk... why not Listen?

## But, Everybody is Doing It!

BY TAMMY SCHELL

Peer pressure is having to be what other kids want you to be. You may worry that you will never be accepted because of who you are, where you live, how you dress or what you look like. You see what happens to the kid who doesn't fit in. They may eat alone, never get asked to dance or be made the butt of jokes and you believe that anything is better than living like that.

A seventeen-year old explains it this way: "When you hear peer pressure you think of people standing there going 'C'mon, do it!' But it's not like that. You go to a party, and everyone is standing around drinking. And you feel left out because you're not. So you get a beer or whatever and you start feeling more relaxed. OK, I'm fitting in. You start talking to people and they start talking to you."

I asked Mercyhurst Prep senior Bethany Shaffer (right) how she handles peer pressure. Below, are some tips, from her perspective, for dealing with peer pressure.

**Pressure # 1: To have the "perfect" body:**

The pressure is incredible. A perfect body draws attention and praise. I think that everyone at some point, has wanted to look like Cindy Crawford or one of the Backstreet Boys. However, I think that the pressure to have a perfect body isn't all that bad. People my age have actually become quite good at accepting people for what they look like. The most important thing is to remember that you are as beautiful or as handsome as you feel.

**Pressure # 2: To be dressed and groomed properly:**

"No way, Mom. I'd die if I had to wear that out of the house. People will laugh at me." Be brave and daring enough to be the first person in the crowd to wear something unique. Try to be different from your friends by the clothes you wear. This is a pressure that really frustrates me. I am always hearing how some of my friends actually write down everything they wear so they don't repeat themselves. I am a Salvation Army shopper till I die, and I just don't understand how people can be judged based on if they wore the same outfit two times.

**Pressure # 3: To be socially active:**

We've all said -- "C'mon Dad! It's not that bad. Everybody else is going. I'll be the only one left behind. That's not fair." This is a pressure that I think is a double-edged sword. No doubt, it's really important to get involved in something. On one hand, being active in negative groups -- "friends" that do things you ordinarily may not do -- is not what to become involved with. On the other hand, over committing is equally negative. I know that I have done this and it seems like every minute of my day is filled. Learning to say "no" is one of the key factors in managing my social life.

**Pressure # 4: To drink and use drugs:**

One thirteen-year-old who began smoking at the age of nine says of the pressure: "It's like sex. You feel like, if you don't do it with your boyfriend, he won't like you." I have always said that I will try anything once -- as long as I don't have to put a light to it! This is one of the biggest pressures for us today. Just about every party I go to offers one of the two options. I have a very big speech on cigarettes and the damage they cause. I have lost three family members to lung cancer.

**Pressure # 5: To have sex:**

Many kids are doing it for the first time just "to be done with it" -- like having sex is like having a tooth pulled. I am a firm believer of waiting until I am married to have sex. There is so much responsibility that comes with having sex. There is no way that I am ready for it. I was recently in a relationship where sex was pushed a lot. I held to my beliefs though. I really believed that I loved him, but I wasn't going to sleep with him just because I loved him. I'm really glad I didn't though -- we broke up.

**Pressure # 6: To get good or bad grades:**

Some kids think that to belong, you can't succeed in school. I think that the pressure to get good grades is positive. There aren't too many people that try to do badly in school. It is a little sad when people think others are "goodie two shoes", just because they do well in school. That just shows their lack of maturity I guess.

*Tammy Schell is the Manager of Community Relations, Marketing and Communications for Hanot Health Foundation. Bethany Shaffer, along with being a student at Mercyhurst Prep, is a peer mediator with Project B-Pit Mind & Body.*



## The Power of Teen Esteem

BY BRUCE BAUMGARTNER



If I asked "How do you feel today?", what would you say? I hope that you would say "I feel good!" But, unfortunately, all of us don't feel that way. In fact, many of us wake up in the morning, look in the mirror and feel crummy about who we are. That's why it's important to believe in the power of teen esteem, to feel good about who you are. It all begins with self-esteem. Self-esteem is the positive energy that you have inside to believe in yourself and accept the special person that you are. However, if you have questioned your self-worth, you are among the majority of teenagers who have low self-esteem.

Studies show that for every 20 high school students, only one has high self-esteem. Only one! Erosion of self-esteem can lead to major problems. Every year, about 40,000 teenagers suffer serious injuries due to substance abuse and other risk-taking behaviors all because they didn't have the courage to say, "No, thank you! I'd rather not!"

What causes low self-esteem? A mother snaps at her daughter, "You'll never amount to anything if you can't keep your room clean." A teacher responds to a student, "What kind of answer was that?" A student whispers to another student, "Come on, take it. What are you, chicken?"

Do these scenes sound familiar? How you feel about yourself can result from interaction with parents, teachers and others. While parents and teachers want you to have high self-esteem, they have bad days too. When you are criticized without being reminded that you are special, your positive energy and self-esteem can be eroded.

But remember this: you're fine just the way you are. It's your actions that sometimes need to be fine-tuned. Peers and others can lower your self-esteem, but only if you let them. Don't ever give anyone permission to make you feel bad about who you are or make you do something you know is wrong.

Images in the media surround us every day -- on TV, in the movies and in magazines. What types of characters do we see? They are perfect, right? Perfect nails, perfect teeth, even perfect windblown hair. Then we look in the mirror and say, "I weigh too much. I should be thinner," or "I'm too short. I should be taller."

You have to stop measuring yourself up to the wrong yardstick -- you are the real world, not those images you see on television or in magazines! Learn to love yourself unconditionally. No matter how thin or thick you are, no matter how tall or short you are, no matter what the color of your skin, the size of your nose or texture of your hair, you're fine just the way you are.

Self-esteem is the positive energy that enables you to be the special person you are. You can build self-esteem by developing a positive self-image. Take time every day to believe in yourself, to feel good about who you are, and to be enthusiastic about what you do. Self-esteem is the master key that will give you the confidence and ability to make winning choices. Empower yourself with the following keys to building self-esteem:

- Use the "I can, I will" approach to life
- Accept and appreciate the differences between yourself and others
- See obstacles as challenges that you can overcome
- Succeed with help from others

With self-esteem, you will have the power to reach your goals and achieve your dreams. You will look at problems in your life as challenges that you can overcome, not barriers that can stop you.

Believe in yourself. The power of teen esteem begins with you!

*Bruce Baumgartner, a spokesperson for Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield's "Power of Teen Esteem" program, has won every major wrestling title. In 1984, he became the first American in 60 years to capture the gold medal in super heavyweight wrestling. Four years later, at the XXIV Olympics in Seoul, South Korea, he won the Silver medal. In 1992, he became the first American ever to medal in three consecutive Olympic games when he won the gold medal at the XXV Olympiad in Barcelona, Spain. Mr. Baumgartner holds both a bachelor's and master's degree in Industrial Arts Education. He currently is the head coach of the Edinboro University of Pennsylvania wrestling team.*



# Peer Pressure is brought to you by

The County of Erie

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as part of the

Cooperator's Project for Community Building

The Cooperator's Project is a regional college community building

As part of the project, the following individuals have contributed to this program

The Seneca Valley

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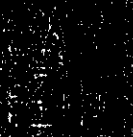
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